

The logo for CO+CREATE NETWORK is centered at the top. It consists of the text "CO+CREATE" on the top line and "NETWORK" on the bottom line, both in a blue, sans-serif font. The text is enclosed in a blue rectangular border. Two horizontal teal lines extend from the left and right sides of the box.

CO+CREATE  
NETWORK

# Facing Workplace Burnout

— For Church Support Staff —

Two horizontal teal lines are located at the bottom of the slide, one above the other.

# Defining Burnout

## Definition

**Burnout is the state of mind that comes with long-term, unresolved stress that can negatively affect your work and your life.**

In an ideal world, nobody would experience burnout. However, it is becoming increasingly common with searches for 'signs of burnout' showing a **24% increase throughout 2020 compared to the previous year.**

With this in mind, it's important to understand the stages of burnout before you can work towards preventing it.

## 5 Stages of Burnout

1. **HONEYMOON PHASE** - When we undertake a new task, we often start by experiencing high job satisfaction, commitment, energy, and creativity.
2. **ONSET OF STRESS** - The second stage of burnout begins with an awareness of some days being more difficult than others. You may find your optimism waning, as well as notice common stress symptoms affecting you physically, mentally, or emotionally.
3. **CHRONIC STRESS** - This is a marked change in your stress levels, going from motivation to experiencing stress on an incredibly frequent basis.
4. **BURNOUT** - Entering stage four is burnout itself, where symptoms become critical. Continuing as normal is often not possible in this state as it becomes increasingly difficult to cope.
5. **HABITUAL BURNOUT** - The final stage of burnout is habitual burnout. This means that the symptoms of burnout are so embedded in your life that you are likely to experience a significant ongoing mental, physical or emotional problem, as opposed to occasionally experiencing stress or burnout.

\*<https://www.thisiscalmer.com/blog/5-stages-of-burnout>

# Symptoms of Burnout

## Common symptoms include:

- Inability to focus
- Irritability
- Job dissatisfaction
- Lack of sleep or reduced sleep quality
- Lack of social interaction
- Lower productivity
- Higher blood pressure
- Anxiety
- Avoidance of decision making
- Change in appetite
- Craving more sugar, carbs, or fatty foods
- Fatigue
- Forgetfulness
- General neglect of personal needs
- Grinding your teeth at night
- Headaches
- Heart palpitations
- Anger or aggressive behaviour
- Apathy
- Chronic exhaustion
- Cynical attitude
- Denial of problems at work or at home
- Feeling threatened or panicked
- Feeling pressured or out of control
- Increased alcohol/drug consumption
- Increased caffeine consumption
- Decrease in feelings of meaning or purpose

# Social Systems and Lowered Resilience

Burnout does not happen in a vacuum. Here are some external factors that might play a role in workplace burnout and feelings of lowered resilience.



# Lowered Resilience

**Definition: Personal resilience is the well of emotional and spiritual energy you draw from to confront challenges. This well can get low!**

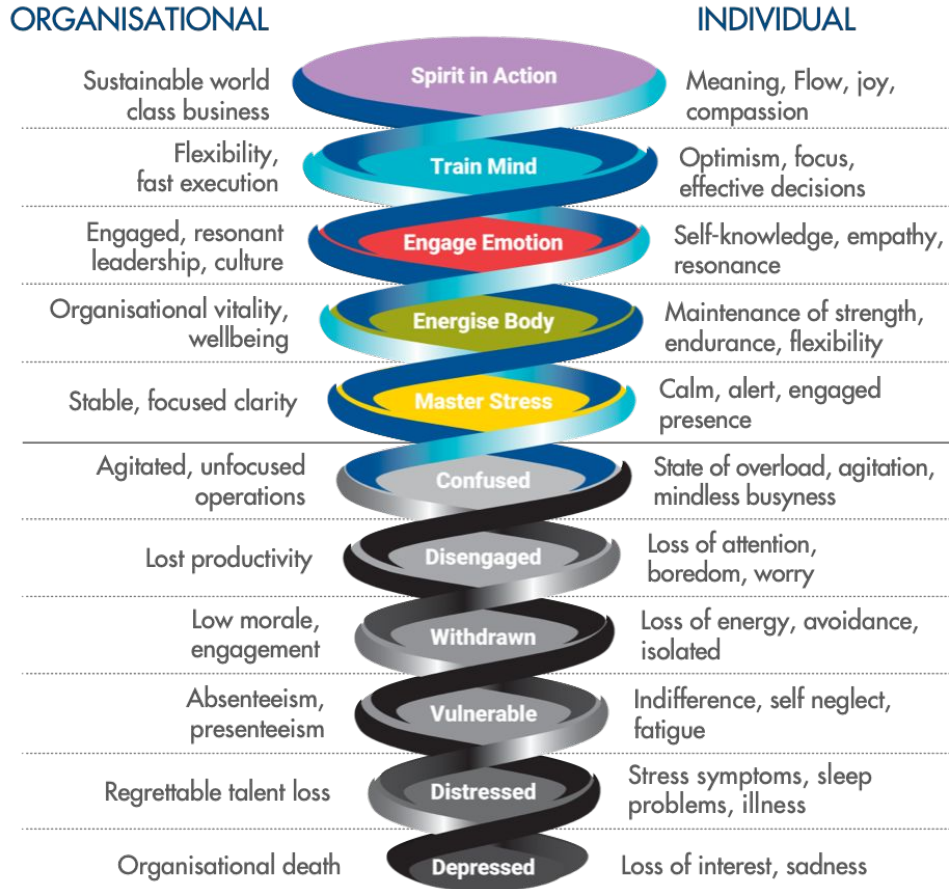
Lowered resilience is:

- Feeling like you're "running on empty."
- the natural response to prolonged stress, anxiety, and trauma.
- NOT the result of a lack of faith or positivity.

How to address lowered resilience:

- Do not feel guilt or shame that you are not as cheery, proactive, etc as you once were.
- Acknowledge that this is a difficult season of life but it will not last forever; change is possible.
- Take steps to rebuild your resilience.

\*<https://resiliencei.com/resources/resilience-spiral/>



# Restoring Resilience

- Acknowledge and validate your feelings.
- Reflect on how this has been an unprecedented year of change and hardship, and acknowledge that you're doing the best that you can.
- Extend grace to yourself and others.
- Make a plan to address causes of stress.
- Prioritize self care. You cannot pour from an empty cup.
- Participate in activities that are restorative to you.
- If necessary, get help for depression or anxiety.

\*<https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/resilience-training/in-depth/resilience/art-20046311>

## Resilience Factors



# Workplace Burnout - The Church as a Workplace

In the following slides, we will talk about “bosses,” “supervisors,” and “coworkers.” These roles can look different in the church vs in a business setting. Perhaps your boss is your Board of Directors or Personnel Committee, perhaps it is a church staff person or clergy member. Maybe you even feel like each church member is your boss in some way (or maybe some church members feel this way and you disagree).

For the purposes of this discussion, your “boss/supervisor” is the person(s) to whom you directly report, and “coworkers” are those with whom you collaborate on church projects (either paid staff or volunteers).

# Possible Causes of Workplace Burnout

**Unclear or new job expectations.** If you're unclear about the degree of authority you have or what your supervisor or others expect from you, you're not likely to feel comfortable at work. Additionally, you may have been assigned new and unfamiliar tasks that were not previously a part of your work duties, causing stress.

**Lack of control.** An inability to influence decisions that affect your job — such as your schedule, assignments or workload — could lead to job burnout. So could a lack of the resources you need to do your work.

**Dysfunctional workplace dynamics.** Perhaps you work with an office bully, or you feel undermined by colleagues, or your boss micromanages your work. This can contribute to job stress.

**Extremes of activity.** When a job is too monotonous or chaotic, you need constant energy to remain focused — which can lead to fatigue and job burnout.

**Lack of social support.** If you feel isolated at work and in your personal life, you might feel more stressed.

**Work-life imbalance.** If your work takes up so much of your time and effort that you don't have the energy to spend time with your family and friends, you might burn out quickly.



# Steps Toward Addressing Workplace Burnout

**Take a REAL break.** Unplug from work for a set period of time, such as a long weekend. Make it clear to your coworkers and supervisors that you will not be checking email or returning calls during this time. Reconnect with a person or activity that gives you joy. Explore programs that can help with stress such as yoga, meditation, or gardening.

**Evaluate and discuss specific concerns with your supervisor.** Try to pinpoint the tasks or issues that are causing you stress. Maybe you and your supervisor can work together to change expectations or reach compromises or solutions. Prioritize what must get done vs. what can wait. See if you can get certain tasks that contribute to your burnout reassigned to others.

**Seek support.** Reach out to coworkers for support. Collaboration might help ease your workload and make it more enjoyable.

**Maintain work/life boundaries.** When working from home it can be easy to start checking emails as soon as you get up and continue until you go to bed, effectively making the workday last all day. Set a working schedule and stick to it. Make it clear to your coworkers and supervisors that you will not be checking email or returning calls outside of work hours.

**Say No.** Be honest with coworkers, friends, and loved ones about your workload and stress level. If you cannot take on another task, speak up! Try saying, “That sounds like a great project, but unfortunately I do not have the bandwidth to take it on right now.”

**Be kind to yourself.** Regular physical activity can help you to better deal with stress and can also take your mind off work. Good sleep restores well-being and helps protect your health. Drinking plenty of water helps, too.

# Discussion Questions

- What level of burnout do you think you are currently in?
- What symptoms of burnout are you experiencing?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, what level of resilience do you feel right now?
- Can you identify some causes of your workplace burnout?
- What are some steps you can take to address these issues right now?
- What do you anticipate being the biggest challenge to addressing these issues?
- What are some long term steps you can take to maintain healthy work/life boundaries?
- What do you need to be successful?